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THE THIRD PAGE

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ROUND THE COUNTRY

JACK DUBOIS: CATTLE THIEF OR GOOD NEIGHBOR?

In last week's article on horses, we mentioned Jack Dubois, one of the most popular ranchers we ever had, who could not leave cattle and horses alone.

Jack had a ranch in the Hand Hills district, where he had several hundred acres of land, adjoining the ranch of the late Bob Shaw of Stettler. He was probably the best all-round cattleman and horseman that ever took up land in our district. He dealt in purebred cattle and horses before other men thought much about them and in 1907 he purchased a Suffolk Punch stallion from Jacques Bros., east of Stettler, for the sum of $2,000.00 to head his herd of horses.

Jack was always nattily dressed in riding breeches, silk shirt, Stetson hat and riding boots and as he came from Texas he spoke with a southern drawl. He was so genial and obliging that he made countless friends in the country south of Stettler, men and women who would swear by him, because he had done them many favors. Even now Jack has friends in the district who are inclined to take any allusion to his partiality towards other people's cattle with a grain of salt, notwithstanding that he was sent down for seven years.

Mr. Ted Gardiner had business dealings with Jack in the early days and he says that as far as he was concerned, he was always a square shooter. The late Bob Shaw never went back on his friendship with Dubois. Mrs. Hampshire, who was formely Mrs. Wells of the Wells Ranch in the Big Valley district tells us that in the hard winter of 1906-07 Jack went out of his way to help protect her stock. The country was burned over that fall and there was little feed for cattle. (That was the year that the late Chas. Streit lost over 100 head in the Leo district). The Wells ranch lost many head during the severe winter and on one occasion Dubois drove a stray steer through the deep snow for six or seven miles to the Lockwood ranch and this steer was found to have the brand of the Wells ranch. If Jack Dubois was a cattle thief, why did he go out of his way to save other people's cattle during that hard winter?

This question is difficult to answer offhand. Dubois had many opportunities to increase his own herd when stray cattle were ranging over a wide area in the deep snow, but on the contrary he protected them and respected the property of his neighbors. Perhaps the solution of the problem is that there were two Jack Dubois, and that like many another man, he had two personalities.

On the one hand, there was Jack Dubois, the prosperous rancher, and the friend of all who came to his door. There was the operator of thousands of acres of bought and leased land in the Hand Hills, the breeder of purebred cattle and horses, and the best judge of stock at any horse or cattle show.

On the other hand, there was Jack Dubois, the cattle rustler, and the associate of Mexicans and half breeds, but this Jack Dubois did not operate at home among his neighbors but at another ranch which he established at the junction of the Battle River and Cutknife Creek, north-east of Stettler, where the country was well adapted for the concealment of stolen property. In the Hand Hills, he worked by day and at the Battle River he worked at night.

So we went back to the history of the Dubois case, when Jack was lifted out of his pleasant surroundings in the country south of Stettler where everybody was his friend, and made to stand trial for stealing cattle and horses in the country north of Stettler, where everybody who had lost stock was his enemy.

This outline of the case has been taken from the files of the Independent and from a recent biography of Detective J.D. Nicholson, who broke the case wide open. This biography is written by J.W. Horan and it is published by the Institute of Applied Arts at Edmonton.

On August 7th, 1907, Mr. Nicholson who was at that time a detective in the "G" division of the Mounted Police at Edmonton, received an anonymous letter from the Stettler district, written by a rancher who had lost a number of his cattle. The writer claimed that there was a dangerous gang of horse and cattle thieves operating in his vicinity. The leader and apparently the receiver was one Jack Dubois and the other members of the gang were two brothers named Jim and Bob Holtz and another two brothers named Nap and Lou Solway. Dubois had a ranch at the junction of the Battle River and Cutknife Creek, as well as in the Hand Hills and the Holtz brothers had a ranch near Paint Earth Creek which was called the Mexican Ranch. The farmers in that district had lost many head of cattle and the writer of the letter warned that the ranchers would take matters into their own hands, if the police did not round up the cattle thieves.

On receiving this letter Detective Nicholson left for Stettler immediately and interviewed Corporal Ensor who was in charge of the local station. Nicholson and Ensor decided to travel as cowboys, looking for their cattle with the X Bar Y brand, and they made the Corby ranch their headquarters, the Corbys being honest ranchers who had lost a number of cattle to the rustlers. They were cowboys in the daytime and made their special investigations at night.

For many weeks that fall, the two policemen watched the operations of Dubois and his gang, but they could not get anything on them. They were accustomed to ride out from the Dubois or the Mexican Ranch only when there was no moon, but the two men could not catch them "cutting out a bunch" from any herd. Dubois had numerous sales of cattle but the animals that he sold had always his own brand.

But towards the end of February, 1908, the detectives decided to wait by the trail that crossed Paint Earth Creek by the Mexican Ranch. They waited for five nights without result, but on the sixth night their vigil was rewarded. Hidden behind a high bank, they heard the lowing of cattle in the distance and in a short time they heard the pleasant drawl of Jack Dubois and the curses of his half-breed partners. They passed within fifteen feet of the trail, and they were driving twelve head of cattle and a number of horses. The two men followed them until they reached the corral at the Mexican Ranch, and when the members of the gang left for their bunkhouse, the detectives climbed into the corral and examined every animal, and ear-marked the animals for future reference.

The next day, Nicholson and Ensor returned to the ranch and found the animals on the range in a well-hidden pasture and they were all "blistered" with new brands.

Nobody could quarrel with this evidence. Jack Dubois was there as well as the Holtz and Solway Brothers and another young fellow by the name of Jack Cardinal, and Dubois was evidently the leader of the gang. Early the next morning the policemen went out to the Mexican Ranch and arrested Jim and Bob Holtz, and then took up the Solways and Jack Cardinal on their ranches between the Mexican Ranch and Stettler. Dubois, however, was not to be found at his Battle River ranch, and they learned that he had left for the Hand Hills. The next day the men journeyed to the Hand Hills but only Mrs. Dubois and the children were at home. Mrs. Dubois said that Jack had gone to Stettler, but on returning to Stettler the detectives found that he had gone to Calgary, where Jack was evidently acting his part as the honest rancher from the Hand Hills.

The annual Horse Show was being held at Calgary that week, and the men thought that the show would be a good place to find Dubois, and there they met Mr. Jacques, who said that Jack was in charge of some of the show horses, and in a few minutes Jack appeared leading two beautiful geldings towards the stand, and he must have been reading the Bible because Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the horses and Jack himself.

Jack was arrested before the showing of the horses was completed, and he engaged the late Judge Tweedie for the defense, who was at that time a lawyer in Calgary.

The case was tried in Stettler before Magistrates Grey and Souch, and the trial was a lengthy one lasting over several weeks. There were many who testified to the good character of rancher Jack Dubois. He had friends in the whole country south of Stettler, who could not believe that he was a rustler. He had friends also in Calgary and Edmonton and his counsel, lawyer Tweedie took up his case with a full belief of his innocence. But the evidence built up by Detective Nicholson was too strong. The twelve head of ear-marked cattle and the re-branded horses would have sent even an elder of the United Church to the penitentiary.

Dubois received a sentence of seven years imprisonment; the Holtz's received seven years each, and the Solways two years each. Jack Cardinal who was only a boy was let off with a suspended sentence.

But it was the good Jack Dubois who went to prison and because of his good behavior he was paroled after serving two years. Mr. Nicholson states in his biography that the expenses of the trial had ruined him, but he left the country and started life anew. "I am happy to be able to say," says Mr. Nicholson, "that he has prospered in his new venture and has kept to the straight and narrow path."

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COSTLY SOUP—It cost a Montreal Chinese laundryman $16 to get four small turtles he needed to make turtle soup for an important family dinner. Just think of all the shirts, socks and undershirts that had to be washed to produce one tureen of soup!—Montreal Gazette.

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Buy War Saving Stamps regularly.

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Meteors are relatively small stores of rock swept up by the earth as it revolves around the sun.

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It takes 31 pounds of soap to make synthetic rubber for tires of an eight-wheel 2½-ton truck.